AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended):   A method for modeling a two-way conversation between a computer-based character and a user, the method comprising:

storing situation data that defines a set of situation tags and associated situation text, wherein the situation tags represent situations that describe contexts in which the user interacts with one or more of a plurality of characters;

wherein a system administrator manages a situation tag type for assembling situation-specific content, and,

wherein said system administrator creates said situation tags for assembling said situation-specific content, and,

wherein said situation tags can be incorporated with contextual accuracy into multiple behavior patterns, and

whereby said incorporation of said situation tags into said behavior patterns reduces the production costs of generating said contextually-accurate two-way conversations,

storing character data that defines a set of character tags and associated character text for each of the plurality of computer-based characters;

wherein said system administrator defines a character tag type for assembling character-specific content, and,

wherein said system administrator creates said character tags for assembling said character-specific content, and,

wherein said character tags can be incorporated with contextual accuracy into multiple behavior patterns, and

whereby said incorporation of said character tags into said behavior patterns reduces the production costs of generating said contextually-accurate two-way conversations,

storing a plurality of behavior patterns,

wherein each of the behavior patterns defines a conversation with the user,

wherein each of the behavior patterns defines the conversation as a series of interactions with the user in accordance with a consistent attitude, and

wherein each of the behavior patterns can be used with the different characters and the different situations, and

wherein each of the behavior patterns is represented as a set of linked frames that specify respective text-based dialogue to be presented to user ; and

wherein said system administrator creates said behavior patterns using the text associated with said situation tags and said character tags, and

wherein said situation tags and said character tags can be incorporated with contextual accuracy into the behavior patterns, and

whereby said insertion of said situation tags and said character tags into said behavior patterns reduces the production costs of generating said contextually-accurate two-way conversations,

selecting one of the situations as a currently selected situation, one of the characters as a currently selected character, and one of the behavior patterns as a currently selected behavior pattern;

presenting text-based dialogue from the currently selected character to the user within the online environment by merging: (1) the text-based dialogue specified by the frames of the currently selected behavior pattern, (2) the situation text of the currently selected situation, and (3) the character text of the currently selected character;

~~presenting response dialogue to the user for selection as a plurality of choices;~~

~~receiving a selection from the user in response to the response dialogue;~~

~~updating a set of relationship variables based on the selection and storing the relationship variables to represent the currently selected character's attitude toward the user based on interaction with the user in the behavior pattern;~~

~~selecting a second behavior pattern for the character as a function of the updated relationship variables when the first behavior pattern has been traversed; and~~

~~presenting text-based dialogue from the currently selected character to the user within the online environment by merging the text-based dialogue specified by the frames of the second behavior pattern with: (1) the situation text of the currently selected situation, and (2) the character text of the currently selected character.~~

Claims 2-3 (Cancelled).

Claim 4 (Cancelled).

Claim 5 (Cancelled).

Claim 6 (Cancelled).

Claim 7 (Cancelled).

Claim 8 (Cancelled).

Claim 9 (Cancelled).

Claim 10 (Cancelled).

Claim 11 (Currently Amended):   A computer-readable medium comprising instruction to cause a computer to model a two-way conversation between a computer-based character and a user by:

storing situation data that defines a set of situation tags and associated situation text, wherein the situation tags represent situations that describe contexts in which the user interacts with one or more of a plurality of the characters,

wherein a system administrator manages a situation tag type for assembling situation-specific content, and,

wherein said system administrator creates said situation tags for assembling said situation-specific content, and,

wherein said situation tags can be incorporated with contextual accuracy into multiple behavior patterns, and

whereby said incorporation of said situation tags into said behavior patterns reduces the production costs of generating said contextually-accurate two- way conversations,

storing character data that defines a set of character tags and associated character text for each of the plurality of computer-based characters,

wherein said system administrator defines a character tag type for assembling character-specific content, and,

wherein said system administrator creates said character tags for assembling said character-specific content, and,

wherein said character tags can be incorporated with contextual accuracy into multiple behavior patterns, and

whereby said incorporation of said character tags into said behavior patterns reduces the production costs of generating said contextually-accurate two- way conversations,

storing a plurality of behavior patterns,

wherein each of the behavior patterns defines a conversation with the user,

wherein each of the behavior patterns defines the conversation as a series of interactions with the user in accordance with a consistent attitude, and

wherein each of the behavior patterns can be used with the different characters and the different situations, and

wherein each of the behavior patterns is represented as a set of linked frames that specify respective text-based dialogue to be presented to the user; and

wherein said system administrator creates said behavior patterns using the text associated with said situation tags and said character tags, and

wherein said situation tags and said character tags can be incorporated with contextual accuracy into the behavior patterns, and

whereby said insertion of said situation tags and said character tags into said behavior patterns reduces the production costs of generating said contextually-accurate two-way conversations,

selecting one of the situations as a currently selected situation, one of the characters as a currently selected character, and one of the behavior patterns as a currently selected behavior pattern;

presenting text-based dialogue from the currently selected character to the user within the online environment by merging: (1) the text-based dialogue specified by the frames of the currently selected behavior pattern, (2) the situation text of the currently selected situation, and (3) the character text of the currently selected character;

~~presenting response dialogue to the user for selection as a plurality of choices;~~

~~receiving a selection from the user in response to the response dialogue;~~

~~updating a set of relationship variables based on the selection and storing the relationship variables to represent the currently selected character's attitude toward the user based on interaction with the user in the behavior pattern;~~

~~selecting a second behavior pattern for the character as a function of the updated relationship variables when the first behavior pattern has been traversed~~; and

~~presenting text-based dialogue from the currently selected character to the user within the online environment by merging the text-based dialogue specified by the frames of the second behavior pattern with: (1) the situation text of the currently selected situation, and (2) the character text of the currently selected character.~~

Claims 12 (Cancelled).

Claim 13 (Currently Amended):   A system comprising:

a database to store:

(a) situation data that defines a set of situation tags and associated situation text, wherein the situation tags represent situations that describe contexts in which the user interacts with one or more of a plurality of characters,

wherein a system administrator manages a situation tag type for assembling situation-specific content, and,

wherein said system administrator creates said situation tags for assembling said situation-specific content, and,

wherein said situation tags can be incorporated with contextual accuracy into multiple behavior patterns, and

whereby said incorporation of said situation tags into said behavior patterns reduces the production costs of generating said contextually-accurate two-way conversations,

(b) character data that defines a set of character tags and associated character text for each of the plurality of computer-based characters, and

wherein said system administrator defines a character tag type for assembling character-specific content, and,

wherein said system administrator creates said character tags for assembling said character-specific content, and,

wherein said character tags can be incorporated with contextual accuracy into multiple behavior patterns, and

whereby said incorporation of said character tags into said behavior patterns reduces the production costs of generating said contextually-accurate two-way conversations,

(c) a plurality of behavior patterns, wherein each of the behavior patterns defines a conversation with the user, wherein each of the behavior patterns defines the conversation as a series of interactions with the user in accordance with a consistent attitude, wherein each of the behavior patterns can be used with the different characters and the different situations, and wherein each of the behavior patterns is represented as a set of linked frames that specify respective text-based dialogue to be presented to the user;

wherein said system administrator creates said behavior patterns using the text associated with said situation tags and said character tags, and

wherein said situation tags and said character tags can be incorporated with contextual accuracy into the behavior patterns, and

whereby said insertion of said situation tags and said character tags into said behavior patterns reduces the production costs of generating said contextually-accurate two-way conversations,

a computer coupled to the database; and

a software engine executing on the computer, wherein the software engine models a two-way conversation by:

selecting one of the situations as a currently selected situation, one of the characters as a currently selected character, and one of the behavior patterns as a currently selected behavior pattern;

presenting text-based dialogue from the currently selected character to the user within the online environment by merging: (1) the text-based dialogue specified by the frames of the currently selected behavior pattern, (2) the situation text of the currently selected situation, and (3) the character text of the currently selected character;

~~presenting response dialogue to the user for selection as a plurality of choices;~~

~~receiving a selection from the user in response to the response dialogue;~~

~~updating a set of relationship variables based on the selection and storing the relationship variables to represent the currently selected character's attitude toward the user based on interaction with the user in the behavior pattern;~~

~~selecting a second behavior pattern for the character as a function of the updated relationship variables when the first behavior pattern has been traversed; and~~

~~presenting text-based dialogue from the currently selected character to the user within the online environment by merging the text-based dialogue specified by the frames of the second behavior pattern with: (1) the situation text of the currently selected situation, and (2) the character text of the currently selected character.~~

Claim 14 (Cancelled).

Claims 15-16 (Cancelled).

Claim 17 (Cancelled).

Claim 18 (Cancelled).

Claim 19 (Cancelled).

Claim 20 (Cancelled).

Claim 21 (New):   The method of claim 1, wherein modeling the two-way conversation further comprises:

a system administrator managing a situation tag type for assembling situation-specific content (FIG. 11), and,

said system administrator creating said situation tags for assembling said situation-specific content (FIG. 15), and

said situation tags being able to be incorporated with contextual accuracy into multiple behavior patterns (FIG. 17),

whereby said incorporation of said situation tags into said behavior patterns reduces the production costs of generating said contextually-accurate two- way conversations, and

said system administrator defining a character tag type (FIG. 18) for assembling character-specific content, and,

said system administrator creating said character tags for assembling said character-specific content (FIG. 19), and

said character tags being able to be incorporated with contextual accuracy into multiple behavior patterns (FIG. 17),

whereby said incorporation of said character tags into said behavior patterns reduces the production costs of generating said contextually-accurate two- way conversations, and

said system administrator creating said behavior patterns using a minimal percentage of static text while incorporating a substantial percentage of the text associated with said situation tags and said character tags (FIG. 16), and

said situation tags and said character tags being able to be incorporated with contextual accuracy into the behavior patterns (FIG. 17),

whereby said insertion of said situation tags and said character tags into said behavior patterns reduces the production costs of generating said contextually-accurate two-way conversations.

Claim 22 (New):   The computer-readable medium of claim 11 comprising instruction to cause a computer to model a two-way conversation between a computer-based character and a user wherein:

a system administrator manages a situation tag type for assembling situation-specific content (FIG. 11), and,

said system administrator creates said situation tags for assembling said situation-specific content (FIG. 15), and

said situation tags can be incorporated with contextual accuracy into multiple behavior patterns (FIG. 17),

whereby said incorporation of said situation tags into said behavior patterns substantially the production costs of generating said contextually-accurate two-   way conversations, and

said system administrator defines a character tag type (FIG. 18) for assembling character-specific content, and,

said system administrator creates said character tags for assembling said character-specific content (FIG. 19), and

said character tags can be incorporated with contextual accuracy into multiple behavior patterns (FIG. 17),

whereby said incorporation of said character tags into said behavior patterns reduces the production costs of generating said contextually-accurate two- way conversations, and

said system administrator creates said behavior patterns using a minimal percentage of static text while incorporating a substantial percentage of the text associated with said situation tags and said character tags (FIG. 16), and

said situation tags and said character tags can be incorporated with contextual accuracy into the behavior patterns (FIG. 17),

whereby said insertion of said situation tags and said character tags into said behavior patterns reduces the production costs of generating said contextually-accurate two-way conversations.

Claim 23 (New):   The system of claim 13 wherein:

a system administrator manages a situation tag type for assembling situation-specific content (FIG. 11), and,

said system administrator creates said situation tags for assembling said situation-specific content (FIG. 15), and

said situation tags can be incorporated with contextual accuracy into multiple behavior patterns (FIG. 17),

whereby said incorporation of said situation tags into said behavior patterns reduces the production costs of generating said contextually-accurate two- way conversations, and

said system administrator defines a character tag type (FIG. 18) for assembling character-specific content, and,

said system administrator creates said character tags for assembling said character-specific content (FIG. 19), and

said character tags can be incorporated with contextual accuracy into multiple behavior patterns (FIG. 17),

whereby said incorporation of said character tags into said behavior patterns reduces the production costs of generating said contextually-accurate two- way conversations, and

said system administrator creates said behavior patterns using a minimal percentage of static text while incorporating a substantial percentage of the text associated with said situation tags and said character tags (FIG. 16), and

said situation tags and said character tags can be incorporated with contextual accuracy into the behavior patterns (FIG. 17),

whereby said insertion of said situation tags and said character tags into said behavior patterns reduces the production costs of generating said contextually-accurate two-way conversations.

Claim 24 (New):   The method of claim 1, wherein modeling the two-way conversation further comprises:

the computer communicating the text-based dialogue via other media for presentment to the user.

Claim 25 (New):   The computer-readable medium of claim 11, wherein modeling the two-way conversation further comprises:

the computer communicating the text-based dialogue via other media for presentment to the user.

Claim 26 (New):   The system of claim 13, wherein modeling the two-way conversation further comprises:

the computer communicating the text-based dialogue via other media for presentment to the user.